Tackling youth unemployment: possible ways out

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The Committee on Employment and Social Affairs adopted the report by Joanna Katarzyna SKRZYDLEWSKA (EPP, PL) on tackling youth unemployment: possible ways out.

Members emphasise that national and EU **policy measures to boost youth employment should be coherent and mutually reinforcing**. They deplore the fact that the current crisis measures aimed at reducing public spending in the crisis countries have already had a **direct negative impact on young people** through cuts in education, employment creation and support services. They point out that young unemployed people come from a wide variety of groups and therefore have to be classified according to their needs and abilities if the measures taken are to be implemented to more useful effect.

In this context, they invite the Commission and the Member States to take measures to:

- where there is more than 25% youth unemployment in the regions, to develop a one-year relief plan to tackle youth unemployment by creating jobs for at least 10 % of the young people affected;
- avoid wasting available resources by checking the possibility of applying examples of best practices from other Member States to their own labour markets;
- provide active support to Member States that agree to reform their vocational training systems;
- draw up **qualitative guidelines for a modern dual education system**, backed up by a list of broadly defined, non-academic key occupations in Europe;
- ensure the involvement of student and youth organisations in the reforms under way;
- prioritise the areas of science, technology, engineering and mathematics in their educational programmes;
- encourage and support the participation of young people and especially women, through education, civil society and quality youth initiatives, in democratic life.

Avoidance of budget cuts and significant investment in measures in favour of young people: Members are deeply concerned at the budget cuts in the Member States in the area of education, training and youth policy, which could result in young people being locked out of both education and employment. They invite the Member States and regional and local authorities to set up integrated territorial development strategies, including training and employment components, starting with measures to avoid early school leaving. Recognising the particularly difficult situation in certain regions where the level of unemployment among young people is above 25 %, Members welcome the fact that EU support for youth employment will be further boosted through the proposed EU Youth Employment Initiative, with a maximum budget of **EUR 8 billion over the seven-year period 2014-2020**. At the same time, they stress that, according to the ILO, **EUR 21 billion** would be needed to implement the Youth Guarantee effectively in the eurozone alone. The specific budget allocation for this employment initiative for young people and the corresponding allocation from the European Social Fund (ESF) should therefore be frontloaded.

Youth Guarantee: while welcoming the decision of the EPSCO Council on 28 February 2013 to agree on a Council recommendation on implementing a Youth Guarantee, they invite the Member States to take action to implement Youth Guarantee schemes in an ambitious manner at national level. They call for the extension of the target groups to **include young people under the age of 30**, including graduates and those leaving training systems without qualifications.

Members inform the Member States that Parliament intends to monitor closely all Member State activities to make the Youth Guarantee a reality. They also stress that efforts and funding aimed at implementing

Youth Guarantee schemes should not discourage the structural efforts and reforms that are required to make the education systems and labour markets in some Member States fit for the future.

They call on the Commission to provide **in its programmes** for measures aimed specifically at tackling youth unemployment, following an integrated global approach.

As specifically regards the provisions to be set in place in regard to the Youth Guarantee, Members propose a series of measures designed to bring about tangible and effective results.

Plan of action on youth employment: Members call on the Commission and Member States, in cooperation with youth stakeholders and with Parliament, to develop a plan of action on youth employment identifying short-term, medium-term and long-term measures. They recommend that, in Member States with a dual vocational training system, there should be an 'alternative apprenticeship' scheme, and thus a Youth Guarantee scheme, in the form of vocational training with more than one employer for young people under the age of 18 who cannot obtain an apprenticeship. They also encourage the fostering of a rapprochement between the worlds of work and education so that training paths such as dual training can be designed that combine theoretical notions with practical experience. They also highlight the need to reassert the value of internships in companies.

Preventing early school-leaving and discrimination in schools: Members call on the Member States to intensify their efforts to reduce early school leaving in order to achieve the goal set out in the EU 2020 strategy of a dropout rate no higher than 10 % by 2012. They invite the Member States to make use of a wide range of measures to fight early school leaving and illiteracy, e.g. reducing class sizes, providing assistance for pupils who cannot afford to complete their compulsory education, etc.

Members also call on the Member States to implement the measures set out in their national Youth Guarantee Schemes, taking into account a gender perspective at all stages of the preparation, programming and implementation of these measures. They invite the Commission and the Member States to take such measures as are necessary to counteract the stereotype that entrepreneurship is a risky and male-dominated activity.

European Youth Corps: Members call on the Commission to **put forward a proposal for a European Youth Corps programme**, with the aim of enabling young people under the age of 30 across Europe to do voluntary work in another Member State than their own for **up to three months**. The objective would be to give young people the chance to use and upgrade their educational and social skills, increase their knowledge of another Member State, and promote friendship and integration across the EU.

Align measures financed under the Structural Funds with the fight against unemployment: Members call on the Commission and the Member States, when making decisions relating to the 2014-2020 programming period, to lay down more stringent and quantifiable criteria concerning the setting, monitoring and evaluation of Structural Fund objectives, with specific targets relating to the fight against youth unemployment, which should also be measurable in terms of gender (in the period 2007-2011, 52 % of European Structural Fund beneficiaries were women). They also call for consideration to be given to a further adaptation of the ESF in order to provide additional support in the areas of young women's training, access to employment and childcare. They call on the Member States to make full and coordinated use of the available EU funding (ERDF, ESF, CF, EAFRD and EMFF), thus enabling young people to play an active part in the economy and society.

EURES: Members stress the need to introduce reforms to EURES with the aim of proactively matching jobseekers and job-changers to existing vacancies. Members call on the Member States, in the absence of specific figures on youth migration flows, to create mechanisms for the research, monitoring and evaluation of such mobility that can be transferred to EURES.

Improving qualifications: Members invite the Commission and the Member States to implement transparency and harmonisation in the recognition of qualifications within the Union, in particular through the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training, Europass and the European Qualifications Framework. They stress that the problem of **'brain waste'** needs to be addressed, since having highly qualified and skilled young people working far below their potential results in non-use of their actual skills and qualifications, while at the same time having negative effects on them in social and psychological terms. Member States are urged to ensure that basic training in job-seeking skills is incorporated into university courses.

Combating women's unemployment: Members recall that unemployment among young women (under 25) is continuing to rise. It has increased from 18.8 % in 2009 to 22.1 % in 2012 and, according to the latest available data, now stands at 22.9 %. They point out that attitudes such as discouragement, self-exclusion and disaffection with work are becoming increasingly widespread and that young women still face worse labour market conditions than young men.

In this context, Members call on the Member States to pursue policies to encourage the presence of women in sectors and careers where they are under-represented, such as the field of science and technology and to combat gender segregation, both in education and in the labour market. Likewise, measures are called for close the gaps with regard to entering the labour market, careers and pay. They take the view that helping women to return to the labour market requires multidimensional policy solutions incorporating lifelong learning and action to combat precarious work and promote work with rights and differentiated work organisation practices, at the woman's request, so that women do not have to give up their careers or take career breaks.